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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC 0083  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 003021

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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS, SCA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
OSD FOR BREZINSKI  
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76 POLAD  
TREASURY FOR D/S KIMMITT, APARAMESWARAN, AJEWELL  
REL NATO/ISAF/AS/NZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [LH](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND MRS NEUMANN VISIT LITHUANIAN PRT  
CHAGHCHARAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Neumann for reason 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (U) Summary: Ambassador and Mrs. Neumann and Lithuanian Ambassador Srsknys visited Lithuanian PRT Chaghcharan on June 23, and met with Ghor Governor and other provincial officials. The Lithuanians impressed the Ambassador with their excellent relations with provincial officials, regular patrols throughout the province and efforts to identify niche projects where their limited development budget could complement the work of their Nordic partners and the U.S. The Lithuanians host Danish, Croatian and Icelandic military contingents that assist with patrols and Danish, Icelandic and US development professionals. Both the Lithuanian commander and Ambassador stressed that continuing support from the US State and AID representatives is crucial to their continued success in Chaghcharan. The governor appears to be a dedicated and capable man and attentive to the needs of his province. The two greatest development challenges in Ghor Province are roads and the expected food shortage next year due to recent drought. End Summary.

12. (U) Ambassador and Mrs. Neumann traveled to PRT Chaghcharan June 23 to meet with the Lithuanian PRT command, provincial governor and local officials. The Lithuanians clearly showed the hard work and effort they have made to create a stable security environment through regular patrols, maintaining good relationships with provincial and local officials, and in working with their Nordic partners and USAID to contribute to development in Ghor Province. Security patrols are carried out by Lithuanian, Danish, Croatian and Icelandic military, a testament to Lithuania's effort to foment partnerships that extend their resources.

13. (U) Reconstruction work is particularly challenging in Ghor, the poorest of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Road construction is the key priority for the PRT, with health,

education, water and economic growth projects also underway. This summer's drought will likely lead to a considerable food shortage that may require assistance from the international community. The Lithuanians are looking for areas to supplement the significant assistance funds provided by USAID, Denmark and Iceland. The PRT commander and Ambassador noted that Lithuania's success in Ghor can only be maintained through the continued cooperation of their small coalition of Nordic partners, as well as the presence of USAID and State representatives. The Lithuanians are doing very well with their limited resources and are committed to success in Chaghcharan. Ambassador Srsknys told Governor Afzali that, "Lithuania has now experienced 16 years of independence from the Soviet Union, and can bring a lot of advice and experience from its transition to a democracy and market economy."

Lithuanian PRT Chaghcharan  
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¶4. (U) The Lithuanians took command of PRT Chaghcharan in early May 2006, which comprises 122 Lithuanian soldiers, 11 Danes, 8 Croats and 8 Icelandic military staff. In addition to the Lithuanian Special Mission, which currently consists of one POLAD who works on aid and political issues, there is an Icelandic aid professional and a Danish military contingent working on development. The Lithuanians are excellent hosts for the USAID and State PRT representatives. They are worried about an upcoming gap in U.S. officer staffing and hope they can be replaced as soon as possible.

¶5. (U) The PRT is situated less than a mile from the dirt

KABUL 00003021 002 OF 004

landing strip, just outside of Chaghcharan. The town is surrounded by low hills resembling brown sand dunes, rugged mountains and steep scree slopes. Chaghcharan is bisected by the Hari Rud river, which divides the residential side of town from the main commercial district and government offices. The dirt and gravel Kabul-Herat road runs alongside the river. Men and children play, swim and fish all up and down the river gorge.

Safe and Secure for the Most Part  
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¶6. (C) The PRT provided a mostly upbeat report on security in the province. Regular PRT patrols rarely encounter resistance. Recently however, the Croatian team was attacked during the night by a group suspected of being Taliban crossing the border from Helmand as a result of Operation Mountain Thrust. There have been four rocket attacks total in the past year, a relatively small number compared to the provinces surrounding Ghor. Minor security worries include crime and the possibility that more bands will move out of areas affected by Operation Mountain Thrust.

¶7. (U) The security operations conducted by the PRT are quite robust. In the one month and a half the current command had been in operation, they had conducted twelve day-time patrols and seven night-time patrols of the areas near Chaghcharan, of which 7 were joint patrols with the ANP. The mobile patrol teams had conducted eight patrols in outlying districts, of 4-5 days duration, and held 32 meetings with district officials.

¶8. (U) On DIAG/DDR, the provincial players and government are at least willing to go through the motions, but the PRT felt there was little actual commitment. They noted that the lists of commanders and the estimates of their weapons are not logically consistent, and that the weapons turned over so far have usually been inoperative. Local officials also argue that there are good commanders and bad commanders and that those that do not challenge peace and stability should not be disbanded. The provincial representative for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Deputy Police Chief

have argued publically that weapons are valuable, and that people should receive money for turning them in. The State rep also said people argue, that without a robust police presence, they are afraid to give up their arms.

#### The Governor and Governance

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¶9. (C) Governor Abdul Ahad Afzali, a Tajik from Badakhshan, is well respected by the PRT command and the USAID and State reps. The PRT also believes he is well respected among local officials and the populace, and makes a concerted effort to deal with key local issues, and works well with the PRT to identify reconstruction projects. The new ANP Chief, General Shah Jahaan Noori, is also from Badakhshan, and maintains close relations with the mayor. The Lithuanian Intelligence Officer suggested the governor was likely linked to the local power brokers and drug trade, but offered no proof.

¶10. (C) According to the State PRT representative, the Governor is skilled at balancing the interests of the three main power brokers in the province: Wolessi Jirga member Dr. Ibrahim Malak Zada (southern Ghor), General Ahmad Murghabi (northern districts) and General Rais Abdul Salaam (Chaghcharan area). These three maintain their influence by having their followers appointed to local and provincial

KABUL 00003021 003 OF 004

office, and according to Lithuanian conjecture, profiting from the drug transit trade.

¶11. (C) Ghor's Provincial Council (PC) remains a relatively weak institution, lacking salary and resources. The governor recently took over the Council's offices, requiring them to secure new ones. They are somewhat effective at listening to constituents and making referrals to the Governor. The PRT State rep said it was difficult to know whether the PC as a whole was truly representative of the entire province, though there is at least one member from each of the districts. The PC Chair and Deputy Mayor of Chaghcharan are both nephews of power broker General Salaam.

#### Development and Reconstruction

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¶12. (U) USAID is the most active development agency and has completed 143 projects in Ghor Province, totaling USD 9.3 million, of which USD 3.5 million was spent in FY2005. USAID's projects include road improvements, seven health centers in the north, six new schools and the purchase of 150,000 text books, and 33 water projects. The USAID officer has made a concerted effort to get local buy-in through a Provincial Development Planning Conference held in early March. Key priorities included the Herat - Chaghcharan road (dirt road improvement using local manual labor), more school construction, community road projects in the Chaghcharan area, microfinance projects and improving the road to Maimana in Faryab province.

¶13. (U) Clearly, road reconstruction and communication are priorities for the people of Ghor. Ambassador and Mrs. Neumann visited a portion of USAID's road resurfacing project, where locals are leveling and graveling the main Chaghcharan road. Mrs. Neumann noted that the condition of the narrow road that skirted the steep sides of the river canyon was not much better than it had been on their visit 39 years earlier. A vehicle requires two to three days to drive the 340 km to Herat and three days for the 440 km to Kabul. In the winter, the roads are often impassable. The USAID project will improve 189 km of this road, and employ local workers at USD 3/day. The Governor, provincial officials and the PRT hope it will lead to a boom in the local economy. (Note: Provincial Officials would prefer a paved road, that we cannot afford. Ambassador Neumann argued for the benefits of the project and promised to return within a year to see how acceptable it is to the local people. End Note.)

¶14. (U) Key challenges in the province remain. Ghor Province is highly vulnerable to drought, and this year's drought is causing serious concern about food shortages. PRT staff and local officials all had hoped the international community would provide more food aid. Ambassador Neumann mentioned that he was asking donor countries active in PRTs to contribute more food aid. In the case of PRT Chaghcharan, he suggested that Iceland or Denmark could focus on food aid if Lithuania was unable to do so. Another worry is the small number of NGOs active in the province, and the limited reconstruction support received from Kabul. Only two capable NGOs remain, and one active in the south has considered pulling out due to the perceived security threat.

Comment

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¶15. (U) The trip to PRT Chaghcharan enhanced U.S. Embassy outreach efforts and resulted in a better understanding of

KABUL 00003021 004 OF 004

conditions in a remote province. The Lithuanians are doing a considerable job with limited resources, using a small coalition of partners to maintain a robust security posture, which allows development work to continue. USAID, the EU and Lithuania's other partners are the serious players in development work, with clearly identified objective in roads, health and economic development. With continued support from USAID and State representatives, and capable NGO partners, PRT Chaghcharan should prove to be one of ISAF's true success stories.

¶16. Bio Note: Governor Shah Abdul Ahad Afzali: Born 1953 in Badakhshan Province, he served previously in the Badakhshan provincial administration and is a member of the Jamiat-e-Islami party. He is known to have connections in the Ministries of Education, Finance and Foreign Affairs.  
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